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THE PLAUTINE TRADITION IN SHAKESPEARE

For the student of the history of literature, the plays of Plautus and Terence have a unique value; they are the only complete representatives of the Greek Comedy of Manners, and they serve in turn as the inspiration of dramatists of the Renaissance throughout the whole of Western Europe. Standing midway in the long line, they gather up the most significant traits of their predecessors to hand on to their descendants.

The tradition, to be sure, is not unbroken. Though Saint Jerome confessed that many a time in his unregenerate days, *Plautus sumebatur in manus*, and though the pious nun of Gandersheim lamented the fondness of the clergy for the unchaste dramas of Terence, the elder poet soon ceased to be read at all, and the younger was valued chiefly for his *sapienter dicta*.¹

But with the Revival of Learning, the Latin dramatists regained their prestige. Both Petrarch and Boccaccio copied manuscripts of Terence with their own hands, and both expressed in no measured terms their admiration for the genius of Plautus. Editions, commentaries, and translations into Italian, French, and German followed, together with performances of the plays, both in Latin and in the vernacular. Italy took the lead in these productions: the *Asinaria* was given about 1485 in the University of Rome, the *Menaechmi* in 1488 at a school in Florence, and in 1502 at the Vatican; and the courts of Ferrara and Mantua witnessed eleven different plays of Plautus and three of Terence within this same period (1486-1502). It was a young poet of Ferrara, Lodovico Ariosto, who wove together threads from half a dozen Latin plays to make the first Italian comedy, *La Cassaria* (1498?). Bibbiena's *Calandria* (a variation on the theme of the *Menaechmi*), Machiavelli's *Clizia* (from the *Casina*), and a host of others, carried on the tradition. In these dramas, classical elements gradually combined with philosophic and romantic themes, and with popular improvised material from the *Commedia dell'*

¹ See W. Creizenach, *Geschichte des neueren Dramas* (Halle, 1893-1909), Vol. I, pp. 1-46.

Arte. There resulted a well-defined type of comedy, with plots closely akin to the Latin; stock figures like the Pantaloon (in the garb of a Magnifico of Venice), the Pedant or Doctor, the Spanish Captain, and the Zanni (a servant, half rascal, half clown, who generally spoke Bergamask dialect); and a recognized set of laughter-producing devices called *lazzi*.²

At the same time there was growing up on Italian soil a form of literature destined to exert a powerful influence on the development of comedy. The prose tales of Boccaccio, Bandello, Cinthio, and Straparola, gathered from all quarters of the globe—bits of distorted classical mythology and history, marvelous stories from the East, and the humorous scenes from real life depicted in the French *fabliaux*—dealt with many of the same characters and presented many of the same situations as the classical Comedy of Manners. For some of these similarities, we need no further explanation than the universality of human nature; others may perhaps be ascribed to descent from a common ancestor—the Euripidean *ἀναγνώρισις*, for instance, coming down by one line through Greek New Comedy and its Latin adaptations, and by another through the Greek and the mediaeval romances. To the dramatist of Italy, and of France and Spain as well, the *novelle* offered a wealth of congenial material, of which he was not slow to avail himself. Thus typical figures like the duped parent and the jealous lover attained a double popularity, and the trickery, disguises, and mistaken identity of the *novella* added many a merry incident to the complications of the stage.³

In Germany and Holland, where the interest in Latin comedy was fostered by schoolmasters intent upon improving both the minds and the morals of their young pupils, a different sort of

² Creizenach, *Geschichte*, Vol. I, pp. 532, 572–583; Vol. II, pp. 1–22; 217–226; 235–302; 351–359. Cf. J. W. Cunliffe, Ed. Gascoigne's *Supposes* and *Jocasta* (Boston, 1906), Introd., pp. ix–xxiv; R. Warwick Bond, *Early Plays from the Italian* (Oxford, 1911), Introd., pp. xvii–l; W. Smith, *The Commedia dell'Arte* (New York, 1912), pp. 1–102.

³ On the romance and its literary relationships, see J. C. Dunlop, *History of Prose Fiction*, Revised Edition, London, 1911; E. Rohde, *Der griechische Roman*, Revised Edition, Leipzig, 1914; S. L. Wolff, *The Greek Romances in Elizabethan Prose Fiction*, New York, 1912; and the introduction by J. E. Edmonds and appendix by S. Gaselee to the edition of Longus in the Loeb Classical Library, London, 1916.

drama arose, the so-called "Christian Terence." This type of play was written in Latin, and aimed to combine the technique and atmosphere of a Roman comedy with an edifying story from Holy Writ. The Old and New Testaments and the Apocrypha all furnished material, but by far the most popular theme was the story of the Prodigal Son. The *Asotus* of Macropedius (c. 1510?) and the *Acolastus* of Gnapheus (1529) follow the Biblical narrative with very little change; Macropedius's *Rebelle* (1535) and *Petriscus* (1536), and the *Studentes* of Stymmelius (1549) shift the scene to school or university, but still inculcate the same moral.⁴

England, too, felt the inspiration of the Latin dramatists. At both Oxford and Cambridge, statutes regulating the production of comedies and tragedies point to a custom of acting already well established by the middle of the 16th Century; and of the seventy-odd plays known to have been performed at those universities between 1547 and 1583, twenty-three were by Plautus and Terence.⁵ The *Andria* had been translated into English as early as 1497, and was reprinted at least three times before the end of the year 1588;⁶ while selections from the first three plays of Terence were gathered into Nicholas Udall's *Floures for Latine spekyng* (1534-35). *Jacke Jugeler* (1553-58?) gives the Mercury-Sosia scene of the *Amphitruo* in an English setting, and *Ralph Roister Doister* (1552-54?) is a free adaptation of the *Miles Gloriosus*. Both these early plays, as well as the more popular *Gammer Gurton's Needle* (1550-53?), show the beneficent influence of the classics in structure, though the originality of the characterization and the freshness of the English atmosphere raise them far above the level of mere imitations.

Nor did the classical influence cease with direct borrowings from the Latin. German education-drama, carried to England

⁴ G. H. Herford, *Studies in the Literary Relations of England and Germany in the 16th Century* (Cambridge, 1886), pp. 70-164; M. W. Wallace, Ed. of *The Birth of Hercules* (Chicago, 1903), Introd., pp. 45-59; Creizenach, *Geschichte*, Vol. III, pp. 246-249, 352-412; Bond, *Early Plays*, Introd., pp. xci-cviii.

⁵ F. S. Boas, *University Drama in the Tudor Age* (Oxford, 1914), pp. 16-18; 386-389. The performance of the *Adelphi* at Queen's College, Cambridge, in 1547-8, which Boas mentions on p. 18, is omitted from the list on p. 386.

⁶ C. F. Tucker Brooke, *The Tudor Drama* (Boston, 1911), p. 156.

by the translation of the *Acolastus* in 1540, must have left its mark on the work of the schoolmasters, although the Latin dramas of Udall and Radcliffe of Hitchin have perished, and the only remaining examples of "Schulkomödie" in the manuscripts of Oxford and Cambridge show more Italian than German influence.⁷ The Prodigal appears in two interludes written about 1550—*Nice Wanton*, and *The Disobedient Child* of Thomas Ingelend—and the same theme is handled with greater art by George Gascoigne in *The Glasse of Government*.

Meanwhile, Italian plays like Ariosto's *I Suppositi* had been translated into English, and Italian romances had found their way into England (sometimes through French or Spanish translations) in collections like Painter's *Palace of Pleasure*. Troupes of Italian actors, too, had passed from the capitals of the Continent to London, and had given many a splendid production before the court. Striking testimony to the performance, not only of written drama, but of improvised comedy, is to be found in allusions to the stock rôles of Italian drama. The scene-headings and stage directions of the earliest editions of Shakespeare's plays refer to certain characters as "the Braggart," "the Pedant," "a pantaloone" (*Love's Labour's Lost* III.1; IV.2; V.1; V.2; *Taming of the Shrew* I.1). Biron, in *Love's Labour's Lost* V.2. 545, lists "the pedant, the braggart, the hedge-priest, the fool, and the boy"; and Jaques includes the lover, the soldier, "the lean and slippered pantaloone" in the "many parts" of mankind's "seven ages" (*As You Like It* II.7.139-166). "The old pantaloone" is referred to in *The Taming of the Shrew* III.1.37, and "the magnifico" in *Othello* I.2.12 seems to have the same stereotyped meaning. "Zany" is used in the proverbial sense of "fool" in *Love's Labour's Lost* V.2.463 and *Twelfth Night* I.5.96, and it is barely possible that the "Bergomask dance" of *Midsummer Night's Dream* V.1.360 had some connection with the Zanni from Bergamo. Allusions to improvising (*Antony and Cleopatra* V.2.216-17; *Hamlet* II.2.420) and to mountebanks (*Hamlet* IV.7.142; *Othello* I.3.61; *Coriolanus* III.2.132) show familiarity with the Commedia dell'Arte; and the mountebank

⁷ See the synopses of the *Bellum Grammaticale* and *Paedantius* by G. B. Churchill and W. Keller in *Shakespeare-Jahrbuch* 34 (1898), pp. 271-281, and the discussion in Boas, *University Drama*, pp. 148-156, 255-265.

scene in Jonson's *Volpone* (II.1) has all the characteristic traits of the improvised farce.⁸

In English drama of the Elizabethan period we may therefore expect to find the native elements which already existed in the moralities and interludes touched by two new influences, one introduced directly from the Latin, the other filtering through Dutch and German education-drama and Italian drama and romance. Shakespeare, "soul of the age," could hardly have escaped these influences. As to his knowledge of education-drama we have no direct evidence, but his acquaintance with the work of Italian "professionals" is evident from the passages just quoted, and the characterization of the actors for whom "Seneca can not be too heavy, nor Plautus too light" (*Hamlet* II.2. 418-419) testifies to his familiarity with the general types of Latin drama. Whenever a translation was available, Shakespeare seems to have preferred it to the original; but he probably knew enough Latin to extract the plot of a play, had a working knowledge of French, and was not altogether ignorant of Italian.⁹ And in addition to all the suggestions that might reach him in print, he undoubtedly heard much talk on the literary topics of his day, and witnessed the production of a host of plays, of which even the names are lost to us.¹⁰

It is the purpose of this paper to examine the plays of Shakespeare for traces of the Plautine tradition, both direct and indirect. The threads are so interwoven that it is practically impossible to separate the two, and in most cases it is useless to attempt to discover direct borrowings. Even general resemblances must be noted with caution; for horseplay and farcical tricks are common to all climes and ages, and it is even possible that, given similar circumstances, the same comic type might arise independently—as the figure of the braggart soldier

⁸ Cf. Smith, *Commedia dell' Arte*, pp. 141-199.

⁹ H. R. D. Anders, *Shakespeare's Books* (Berlin, 1904), pp. 6-73. The results of this study are summarized by W. A. Neilson and A. H. Thorndike in *The Facts about Shakespeare* (New York, 1913), pp. 50-59.

¹⁰ Cf. the famous assertion of Stephen Gosson, in *Playes confuted in five actions* (1582): "I may boldly say it, because I have seene it, that the Palace of pleasure, the Golden Asse, the Æthiopian historie, Amadis of Fraunce, the Rounde table, baudie Comedies in Latine, French, Italian, and Spanish. have bene thoroughly ransackt to furnish the Playe houses in London."

actually did in Greece of the 4th Century B.C. and in 16th Century Italy.¹¹

But after all these allowances have been made, certain features remain to prove indisputably Shakespeare's kinship with the Latin comic poets. We may note, first of all, resemblances in the external form of the play. The ancient Roman stage normally represented a street, with three house doors.¹² In the written comedies of Renaissance Italy the scene was regularly a street or square, with houses of three dimensions at the back, and the painted canvas for the improvised plays nearly always showed three main houses, with a balcony on the middle house and perhaps on each of the other two.¹³ The text of the earliest English comedies implies a similar setting—in *Jacke Jugeler*, the house of Maister Boungrace; in *Ralph Roister Doister*, the house of Dame Custance; in *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, the houses of Gammer Gurton and Dame Chat.¹⁴ In Shakespeare, aside from the numerous scenes of locality undetermined to which modern editors prefix "A Street," "An Open Place," etc., there are some in which the action unquestionably requires a house as the background. This is the case—to cite only a few instances—when Antipholus of Syracuse is led in to dine with Adriana, whereas the true master of the house, arriving later, finds the door locked (*Comedy of Errors*, II.2; III.1); when Jessica, after Shylock's injunction to go in and shut the doors, opens the casement to her lover and then steals away with him (*Merchant of Venice* II. 5; II.6); and when

¹¹ Gr. Senigaglia, *Capitan Spavento* (Florence, 1899), pp. 24–33. On the general resemblance between these two periods, see also Bond, *Early Plays*, Introd., pp. xxii–xxiii.

¹² The three entrances (a heritage from the royal palace of Greek tragedy) seem to have been represented even when the action of the play required only one house, as in the *Amphitruo* of Plautus, or two houses, as in the *Adelphi* of Terence. See Dziatzko-Hauler, Ed. *Phormio* (Leipzig, 1913), Introd., p. 36. The action of the *Rudens* of Plautus was supposed to take place on the seashore, and that of the *Heauton Timorumenos* of Terence in the country; but we do not know exactly how the scenes of these plays were represented.

¹³ Bond, *Early Plays*, Introd., p. xliii; Smith, *Commedia Dell'Arte*, pp. 116–117.

¹⁴ If we might assume that, at the beginning of Act III, Hodge follows a convention of Latin comedy and speaks back into the house of Sym Glover (Cf. Plaut *Curc.* 223–228; *Mil.* 411–414; Ter. *Adelph.* 511–516; *Phorm.* 51), *Gammer Gurton's Needle* would present an exact parallel to the classical setting.

Iago's cries of "What, ho! Thieves!" rouse Brabantio to the discovery of Desdemona's flight (*Othello* I. 1).

The prologue had been characteristic of classical drama from the time of Euripides. In Plautine comedy, it took the form of a greeting to the audience, with a statement of the setting and a summary of the plot, which was delivered sometimes by a special Prologus (*Captivi*, *Casina*, *Menaechmi*), sometimes by a supernatural being (the Lar Familiaris in the *Aulularia*, Arc-turus in the *Rudens*) or a personified abstraction (Auxilium in the *Cistellaria*, Luxuria in the *Trinummus*), sometimes by one of the characters in the play (Mercury in the *Amphitruo*, Charinus in the *Mercator*). One Leone de Sommi, an actor-manager of 16th Century Italy, gives special commendation to the prologue "in the manner of the ancients," spoken by the poet or his representative, clad in a toga and wearing a crown of laurel.¹⁵ We may picture such a figure appearing to deliver the graceful sonnets at the beginning of Acts I and II of *Romeo and Juliet*, or to herald the splendid deeds of each act of *Henry V*. "Rumour, painted full of tongues," in the Induction to *2 Henry IV*, and "Time, the Chorus," at the beginning of Act IV of *The Winter's Tale*, correspond roughly to Plautus's allegorical figures. And though there is no play in which one of the characters gives the necessary information in a direct address to the audience, the long speeches of Aegeon to the Duke in the first scene of *The Comedy of Errors*, and of Lucentio to Tranio at the opening of *The Taming of the Shrew*, perform exactly the same function.¹⁶ The Epilogues spoken by a dancer in *2 Henry IV* and by the actor who had played Rosalind in *As You Like It* correspond roughly to the dismissal of the audience by the *caterva* in Plautus (*Captivi*, *Cistellaria*, etc.) The last words of the King in *All's Well* and of Prospero in *The Tempest* run directly into the Epilogue, as in the *Mercator* and *Pseudolus*; and "Your gentle hands lend us," "With the help

¹⁵ Cf. *Misogonus*, Prologue, l.18. De Sommi's dialogue is quoted in Smith, *Commedia dell' Arte*, pp. 69-77. On prologue and epilogue in English drama, see W. Creizenach, *The English Drama in the Age of Shakespeare* (Philadelphia, 1916; an English translation, with additions and corrections, of Vol. IV, Books I-VIII, of Professor Creizenach's *Geschichte des neueren Dramas*), pp. 275-277.

¹⁶ In the *Menaechmi* of Plautus, the Latin original of *The Comedy of Errors*, the information is given by the Prologue.

of your good hands," are faint echoes of the Plautine *plaudite*.¹⁷ In view of the numerous Latin comedies that close either with a banquet on the stage or with the mention of one behind the scenes, it is perhaps significant that *The Comedy of Errors* ends with an invitation to dinner, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* with the promise of a marriage feast, and *The Taming of the Shrew* with the feast itself.¹⁸

Other resemblances in form are probably accidental. One might draw a neat parallel between Plautus's variation of lyric and simple dialogue meters, and Shakespeare's alternation of verse and prose, especially when the senarius of the Latin poet and the prose of the English bring a distinct lowering of emotional tone.¹⁹ It is interesting to note that letters, which Shakespeare regularly casts in prose,²⁰ are composed in iambic senarii, breaking in upon a lyric scene, in three different passages in Plautus.²¹

The plots of Shakespeare's plays, too, contain Plautine elements—though all these elements are found in the romances as well, and it seems probable that in most cases they reached Shakespeare through the latter channel rather than by direct descent from Plautus and Terence. The Roman dramatists had made much of mistaken identity, whether due to natural resemblance or to the deliberate assumption of another rôle. Italian comedy took up the idea with particular zest, adding

¹⁷ The Prologues and Epilogues of *Troilus and Cressida* and *Henry VIII* also follow the classical model, but are probably not by Shakespeare.

¹⁸ This feature may be a survival from Old Comedy, since the *Lysistrata* and *Pax* of Aristophanes likewise end with a banquet. The feasting takes place on the stage in Plautus's *Asinaria*, *Persa*, and *Stichus*; is anticipated in the *Bacchides*, *Curculio*, *Pseudolus*, and *Rudens* of Plautus and the *Phormio* of Terence. Cf. *Ralph Roister Doister*, V. 4. 16-18; *Gammer Gurton's Needle* V. 2. 326; *Buggbears* V. 9. 69-71.

¹⁹ The contrast is of course more marked in the "innumeris numeris" of Plautus than in the comparatively simple meters of Terence. *Amph.* 463-498, *Most.* 747-782, *Rud.* 1338-1356, and *Trin.* 998-1007 furnish especially good examples.

²⁰ With rare exceptions, such as the sonnets of *Love's Labour's Lost* IV. 3 and *All's Well* III. 4, and the rhymed verse of *All's Well* IV. 3 and *Hamlet* II. 2.

²¹ *Bacch.* 997-1035; *Pers.* 501-527; *Pseud.* 998-1014. The letters of *Asin.* 751-807, *Curc.* 429-436, and *Pseud.* 41-73 occur in the middle of iambic scenes; in *Bacch.* 734-747 the trochaics of the remainder of the scene are used for the letter.

one complication to another until the plots passed even the most remote limits of possibility.²² The comparatively simple theme of the *Menaechmi*, the confusion resulting from the likeness between twin brothers, is taken over by Shakespeare for *The Comedy of Errors*; but the situation is complicated by the addition of a double for the serving-man—a suggestion which, as a German critic pointed out half a century ago, may have come from the *Amphitruo*.²³

The underplot of *The Taming of the Shrew* borrows from Gascoigne's *Supposes* (a translation of Ariosto's *Suppositi*) two disguise motives, one of which is closely paralleled in Plautus. Just as the wandering Sycophant is hired to pose as a messenger from Charmides, and, all unwitting, confronts old Charmides himself (*Trin.* 843-997), so a Pedant from Mantua is induced to play the part of Lucentio's father, Vincentio, and is summoned to the door by the knock of "the right Vincentio" (IV. 2; IV. 4; V. 1). The other motive is a composite of several situations in classical comedy. The *Captivi* represents a noble-minded slave who, when he and his master are prisoners of war, assumes his master's dress and name, so that the latter may escape. In the *Eunuchus*, too, an exchange of clothing takes place, but this time the object is to give Chaerea access to the girl with whom he is in love. Similarly, in the *Amphitruo*, Jupiter and Mercury take the forms of Amphitruo and his slave Sosia, in order that Jupiter may enjoy Amphitruo's wife. The lover in Shakespeare's play first arranges that his servant Tranio shall "keep house and port and servants" in his stead, and then, in the guise of a pedant, presents himself as a tutor for his lady.²⁴ Of the farcical

²² On the whole subject of disguise in drama, see V. O. Freeburg, *Disguise Plots in Elizabethan Drama* (New York, 1915). Cf. Creizenach, *English Drama*, pp. 220-223. The theme is of course common in the literature of the East and in mediaeval romances which are quite independent of Latin influence.

²³ M. Rapp, *Geschichte des griechischen Schauspiels* (Tübingen, 1862), p. 342, quoted by K. von Reinhardtstoettner, *Plautus: Spätere Bearbeitungen plautinischer Lustspiele* (Leipzig, 1886), pp. 574-575. The similarity of *Comedy of Errors*, I. 2, II. 2, III. 1, III. 2, IV. 1, IV. 4, V. 1, to scenes in the *Amphitruo* was noted by Paul Wislicenus, *Zwei neuer entdeckte Shakespeare-Quellen*, in *Die Literatur*, 1874, Nos. 1 and 3 (reviewed in *Shakespeare-Jahrbuch* 9 [1874], p. 330).

²⁴ Ariosto, in the prologue to the prose version of *I Suppositi* (quoted by Bond, *Early Plays*, Introd., p. lii) acknowledges his debt to the *Eunuchus* and the *Captivi*.

developments of this idea, so frequent in Italian comedy, there is a hint in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* IV.2, where Mistress Ford hustles Falstaff into the gown of "my maid's aunt, the fat woman of Brainford," and then stands by to see him "most unpiteously" beaten by Master Ford.

In a variant which is not found in Plautus and occurs in only a few scattering instances in Italian drama, but is repeatedly employed by English playwrights, a character assumes disguise for the purpose of watching unobserved. The Duke in *Measure for Measure* announces his intention of quitting the city, but actually remains, in the garb of a friar, and takes an important part in the action. King Polixenes attends the sheep-shearing in disguise, in order to spy upon the love-affairs of his son (*Winter's Tale* IV.4). And in *Lear*, the banished Kent, returning in humble guise, and the outlawed Edgar, as "poor Tom," still wait upon their king.

Another off-shoot—and by far the most popular—represents a woman "caparisoned like a man." Julia, Portia, Rosalind, Viola, Imogen, all have their prototypes in Italian drama and romance, although the surpassing charm of these heroines is due to Shakespeare alone. The additional complication which gives to Viola a twin brother exactly like her, is found in Italian literature again and again.

The reverse of this figure, the "Boy Bride," comes much more directly from Latin comedy. The story of the old man who married a fair maiden, only to find her a boy in disguise, was handled by Plautus in the *Casina*, enjoyed some popularity on the Italian stage, and received its most notable treatment in Jonson's *Epicoene, or the Silent Woman*. Shakespeare has only two faint reminiscences of this situation—in the Induction to *The Taming of the Shrew* (borrowed from the earlier *Taming of a Shrew*), where a lad plays "madam wife" to Christopher Sly, and in the closing scene of *The Merry Wives*, where Dr. Caius and Slender are duped. Each snatches from the troop of fairies a dancer whom he supposes to be sweet Anne Page, and then each discovers that he has married "oon garsoon," "a great lubberly boy."²⁵

²⁵ Students of folk ritual will notice the resemblance of the disguised dancers of *The Merry Wives* to the "Bessy" or "Maid Marian" of sword play or morris dance, and may be inclined to trace all these figures back to the primitive ceremonial whereby men and women exchanged clothing.

Another constantly recurring motive in New Comedy (especially in Menander) is the restoration of a long-lost son or daughter.²⁶ Sometimes the child has been separated from its parents by an accident;²⁷ sometimes it is a love-child and has been exposed to preserve the mother's good name.²⁸ This motive occurs in three of Shakespeare's plays (*Comedy of Errors*, *Winter's Tale*, and *Cymbeline*), and in the first and last was apparently added by him to the plot as he found it in his sources. *The Comedy of Errors* differs slightly from its original in making a storm at sea responsible for the separation of the family, whereas in the *Menaechmi* one son strays away in a crowd; the kidnapping of the two little princes in *Cymbeline* corresponds to the loss of Hanno's daughters in the *Poenulus*; and the voyage of Antigonus to "the deserts of Bohemia," with the cruelly slandered babe of Leontes (*Winter's Tale* III.3) recalls the mission of Lampadio in the *Cistellaria*. The "most curious mantle, wrought by the hand of his queen mother," which proves the identity of Arvigarus, "a mole, a sanguine star," upon the neck of Guiderius (*Cymbeline* V.5. 360-368), and "the mantle of Queen Hermione's, her jewel about the neck of it, the letters of Antigonus found with it," which proclaim Perdita the king's daughter (*Winter's Tale* V.2. 36-38), are exactly like the "tokens" of classical comedy.²⁹

²⁶ The story of *Pericles*, with its marvelous conglomeration of perils by land and by sea, treasures washed up by the waves, and the reunion of the long-separated father, mother, and daughter, is based on the mediaeval romance of *Apollonius of Tyre*. For the interaction between drama and romance, see p. 67 above.

²⁷ Plautus, *Captivi*, *Curculio*, *Epidicus*, *Menaechmi*, *Poenulus*, *Rudens*; Terence, *Andria*, *Eunuchus*. Similarly, in *Supposes*, the five-year-old son of Cleander is lost at the sack of Otranto.

²⁸ Plautus, *Casina*, *Cistellaria*; Terence, *Adelphi*, *Hecyra*. In Terence's *Heauton Timorumenos* the child of a legal marriage is exposed simply because of her undesirable sex. *Misogonus* represents the elder of twin sons as being "sent away" at birth, without adequate reason.

²⁹ A casket of *crepundia* is mentioned in Plautus's *Cistellaria* and Terence's *Eunuchus*, and the tiny trinkets are described in the *Epidicus* and *Rudens* of Plautus. (Cf. the *Ion* of Euripides.) "Privie marks" have a precedent in the scar on the left hand of Agorastocles (Plaut. *Poen.* 1073-1074), and the scar on the brow of Orestes in the *Electra* of Euripides. Similarly, the identity of Eugonus in *Misogonus* is established by a sixth toe, and that of Dulipo in *Supposes* by a mole on the left shoulder.

Perhaps the most common means of identification in Greek and Latin drama is the ring snatched by the mother of the child from the hand of its father on the night of their one meeting. This motive reappears, in a somewhat different setting, in *All's Well* IV.2, V.3, where two rings are brought forth to prove that Bertram, under the impression that he was meeting Diana, has really wedded Helena. The exchange of rings also figures, in connection with disguise, in the plots of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *Twelfth Night*.³⁰

Some of the characters in Shakespeare's plays show a remote resemblance to their classical forbears. Beyond an occasional hint of lowly rank (*Winter's Tale*, *Tempest*), which could have come into English quite as readily through the romances as through Italian comedy, the heroine has little in common with the *meretrices* of Plautus. The hero, however, continues to be "a proper stripling and an amorous." Lucentio's undoing (*Taming of the Shrew* I.1) recalls the fate of Antipho in the *Phormio* or Chaerea in the *Eunuchus*, and Romeo's rhapsody on love (*Romeo and Juliet* I. 1. 167–200) sounds the same note as the soliloquy of Alcesimarchus (Plaut. *Cist.* 203–228). Master and servant are still on familiar terms; witness Lucentio's outpouring of his heart to Tranio (*Taming of the Shrew* I.1. 153–163), and the gibes of Speed at Valentine's doleful plight (*Two Gentlemen* II.1. 18–33).³¹ The balancing of one love-affair by another (*Merchant of Venice*), the portrayal of contrasted characters (*Two Gentlemen*), and the presentation of such problems as the conflict between love and duty or love and friendship (*Two Gentlemen*), all have parallels in Plautus and Terence.³²

³⁰ The ring taken by the girl figures in Terence's *Adelphi*, also in the *Epi-trepontes* of Menander and probably in the lost *Auge* of Euripides, while the plot of the *Hecyra* of Terence turns upon the ring snatched by the young man. Only the first of these motives appears in the story of Boccaccio (Third Day, Ninth Novel) upon which the plot of *All's Well* is based. A ring also brings about the recognition in the *Curculio* of Plautus and the *Heauton Timorumenos* of Terence, although the circumstances are somewhat different.

³¹ Cf. Plaut. *Asin.* 616–637; *Curc.* 1–95; *Poen.* 129–197; *Pseud.* 3–128; Ter. *Eun.* 46–80. For some points in the discussion of comic characters, I am indebted to Bond, *Early Plays*, Introd., pp. xxix–xli; Smith, *Commedia dell'Arte*, pp. 4–10, 84–87; Creizenach, *English Drama*, pp. 294–312.

³² Two young men in love appear in the *Bacchides*, *Epitricus*, and *Mostellaria* of Plautus, and in all of Terence's plays except the *Hecyra*. The dutiful Lysiteles

The *pater familias* of Latin comedy was useful chiefly because he furnished (albeit unwillingly) the necessary funds for his son's romance. Sometimes the memory of his own wild oats made him tolerant of the young man's misdemeanors; more often he took an uncompromising stand as censor of morals and *laudator temporis acti*.³³ In four plays of Plautus (*Asinaria*, *Bacchides*, *Casina*, *Mercator*), the old men cast lustful eyes at their sons' mistresses; in the *Aulularia*, the rich old bachelor Megadorus makes an honorable request for the hand of the miser's daughter, without dowry. Italian dramatists took over these figures, and, by exaggerating their ridiculous aspects, developed the Pantaloon and the Pedant or Doctor, the former, as a rule, the father of hero or heroine, the latter often a suitor for the lady's hand. Both were unattractive figures, stupid, avaricious, amorous, and easily duped by the young people in the play. Shakespeare's treatment is much more kindly, but we can still recognize traits of the classical *senex* in the stern decrees of Antonio (*Two Gentlemen* I.3) and Baptista (*Taming of the Shrew* I.1), in Capulet's reminiscences of by-gone days (*Romeo and Juliet* I.5), and in the "wise saws" of Polonius to Laertes (*Hamlet* I.3). Silvia's father traps Valentine by the story of a coy lady whom his "aged eloquence" has failed to move (*Two Gentlemen* III.1. 76-136), and "old Signior Gremio" offers plate and gold, Tyrian tapestry and arras counterpoints, as dower for the fair Bianca (*Taming of the Shrew* II.1. 347-364). The Pedant of *The Taming of the Shrew* is very faintly outlined, but Holofernes of *Love's Labour's Lost* has the characteristic traits of the Italian Doctor. His speech is a hodge-podge of Latin and English ("scraps" from "a great feast of languages"); he talks pompously of Dictynna and Ovidius Naso, quotes a line from "good old Mantuan" and then caps it with an Italian couplet (IV.2; V.1).³⁴ Sir Hugh Evans, of *The Merry Wives*,

is contrasted with the spendthrift Lesbonicus in the *Trinummus* of Plautus, and the apparent conflict between love and friendship complicates the plot of the *Bacchides* and the *Adelphi*.

³³ Cf. Plaut. *Trin.* 279-323; Ter. *Heaut.* 200-210. The father's moralizing tendencies are shared by Lydus, the paedagogus of the *Bacchides*. (Cf. especially 11. 419-448.)

³⁴ W. Keller (*Shakespeare-Jahrbuch* 34[1898,] pp. 278-279) considers Holofernes indebted to the hero of the Cambridge University play *Paedantius*, and Sidney Lee (*The French Renaissance in England*, New York, 1910, pp. 423-427)

is drawn with a gentler hand, but he also airs his own learning when he asks young William Page "some questions in his accidence" (IV.1). Like his Italian predecessors, Sir Hugh talks with an accent, and his mixture of Welsh dialect and Latin must have given very much the same effect as the Bolognese dialect and Latin of Doctor Gratiano.

In the comedies of Plautus the heroine was sometimes accompanied by an aged *lena* (*Asinaria*, *Cistellaria*, *Curculio*, *Mostellaria*); in those of Terence (following the Euripidean tradition), she was usually attended by a nurse or a faithful old slave (*Adelphi*, *Eunuchus*, *Heauton Timorumenos*, *Phormio*). The latter was a rather shadowy figure, not unkindly portrayed; the former was the personification of cruelty, inebriacy, and greed. These two figures merged in the Italian *ballia*, a garrulous old woman who acted as go-between for the lovers. Such a character survives in Dame Quickly of *The Merry Wives* (especially I.4; III.4) and, most notably, in Juliet's nurse. A trace of the nurse's coarseness lingers, too, in younger maids who act as confidantes for their mistresses—Lucetta in *The Two Gentlemen*, Margaret in *Much Ado*, Emilia in *Othello*.

The slave, who was always the chief fun-maker, and often the most important actor, of classical comedy, passes over into the resourceful servant of Italian drama, and thence into the English clown—a character who retains all the humorous possibilities of the Latin *servus*, although he no longer controls the plot. Like the Plautine slave, he is given to quibbles and retorts (*Two Gentlemen* II.5)³⁵ and to abuse of other servants (*Romeo and Juliet* I. 1);³⁶ he soliloquizes (*Taming of the Shrew* IV.1),³⁷ holds mock-serious debates with himself (*Merchant of Venice* II.2),³⁸ and addresses remarks directly to the audience (*Two Gentlemen* II.3);³⁹ he shows the same pretended stupidity

thinks that he detects in the dialogue of *Love's Labour's Lost* IV. 2, *Merry Wives* IV. 1, and *Taming of the Shrew* III. 1 the influence of French plays on Italian models, especially *Le Fidelle* and *Le Laquais* of Larivey.

³⁵ Cf. Plaut. *Epid.* 1-80; *Pers.* 16-32. In the notes on this paragraph, I have given only a few of the many possible classical parallels.

³⁶ Cf. Plaut. *Asin.* 297-307; *Most.* 1-75.

³⁷ Cf. Plaut. *Aul.* 587-607; *Merc.* 111-119; Ter. *Heaut.* 668-678.

³⁸ Cf. Plaut. *Asin.* 249-264; *Epid.* 81-100; Ter. *And.* 206-225.

³⁹ Cf. Plaut. *Bacch.* 1072-1074; *Pseud.* 562-573a.

(*Taming of the Shrew* I.2.5-19);⁴⁰ the same burlesque exaggeration of grief (*Two Gentlemen* II.3).⁴¹ These traits are most marked in the early plays, and Launce, Launcelot Gobbo, and Grumio are close kin to the slave of Plautus.

Sometimes a subordinate rôle in Latin comedy fell to a boy, whose pert retorts to questions (Plaut. *Pers.* 183-250; *Stich.* 315-325) and shrewd characterizations of other people in the play (Plaut. *Capt.* 909-921; *Pseud.* 767-789) filled a gap in the action and put the audience in a good humor. Moth in *Love's Labour's Lost*, Biondello in *The Taming of the Shrew*, Falstaff's diminutive page in *2 Henry IV*, and the boy attached to the "three swashers" of *Henry V*, all belong to this category, and slight as are their parts, their relationship to the Plautine *puer* is unmistakable.

But of all the characters who have come down from classical times, the braggart soldier has the longest history. He flourished on the Italian stage for three hundred years, and "Capitan Spavento da Vall' Inferna" was the favorite rôle of that prince of comedians, Francesco Andreini. In English, he furnished the basic features for "the most humorous character in all literature." For underneath his mountain of flesh and the whimsical humor that endears him to every heart, Falstaff is still the *miles gloriosus*, lauded by his associates for his military prowess and his power over feminine hearts, but doomed to disaster both on the field of battle and in the lists of love. Other braggarts, too, tread the stage of Shakespeare: Don Armado, the fantastical Spaniard; Parolles; who displays the most contemptible traits of the Italian *bravo*; Bardolph, Nym, and Pistol; Doctor Caius and Sir Hugh Evans; and Sir Andrew Aguecheek. All these show some characteristics of the classical *miles*—his boastfulness when no peril threatens, and his cowardice in the face of danger, his ambition to be a lady-killer, and his ignominious end.⁴²

⁴⁰ Cf. Plaut. *Poen.* 357-399; *Pseud.* 22-96.

⁴¹ Cf. Plaut. *Pseud.* 79-82.

⁴² On the figure of the *miles gloriosus* in literature, see J. Thümmel, *Der Miles Gloriosus bei Shakespeare*, in *Shakespeare-Jahrbuch* 13 (1878), pp. 1-12; O. Ribbeck, *Alazon* (Leipzig, 1882); K. von Reinhardtstoettner, *Plautus: Spätere Bearbeitungen plautinischer Lustspiele* (Leipzig, 1886), pp. 595-680; Gr. Senigaglia, *Capitan Spavento* (Florence, 1899). It should be noted that the Falstaff of *The Merry Wives* is much closer to the stock character than the Falstaff of the historical plays.

Not only the plots and the characters, but the stage-tricks of ancient comedy persist in Shakespeare. Characters are very frequently heralded before their entrance (e.g., *As You Like It* I.1.28).⁴³ Proteus completely overlooks Valentine, although the latter must have been in plain sight on the stage (*Two Gentlemen* III.1.188-191);⁴⁴ and Julia, from her hiding-place, listens to her lover's wooing of Silvia, and comments aside on what she hears (*Two Gentlemen* IV.2).⁴⁵ Satirical asides on the speech of another character, a device used by Plautus and Terence, and copied repeatedly by Italian comic writers, occur in the comments of the Second Lord on Cloten's boastful utterances (*Cymbeline* I.2).⁴⁶ The ancient device by which a slave or parasite, in his anxiety to be the bearer of news, knocked down everybody in his way, and then arrived too breathless to deliver his message, is suggested in *The Comedy of Errors* III. 2.71, IV.2.28-30, *Much Ado* V.2.95-102, and, most humorously, in *Romeo and Juliet* II.5.18-66.⁴⁷ The cook, with his spit and basket, still makes confusion worse confounded (*Romeo and Juliet* I.3; I.5; IV.2; IV.4);⁴⁸ and knocking "as he would beat down the gate," occurs again and again with comic effect (*Comedy of Errors* III.1.30 ff.; *Taming of the Shrew* I.2.5 ff.; V.1.14 ff.; *Merry Wives* I.1.74; *2 Henry IV.* II.4.380).⁴⁹ And horseplay, cudgelings, and fisticuffs still call forth a laugh from the groundlings, just as they did in the days of Plautus

⁴³ Cf. Plaut. *Amph.* 148; Ter. *And.* 174; *Ralph Roister Doister* IV. 5.5. Comic clichés are discussed in Bond, *Early Plays*, Introd., pp. xlv-i; Creizenach, *English Drama*, pp. 275, 299-303, 325-326. My notes include only a few of the many classical parallels.

⁴⁴ Cf. Plaut. *Asin.* 267-296; Ter. *Phorm.* 841-851; *Ralph Roister Doister* V. 2. 1-4; *Supposes* V. 2. 1-7.

⁴⁵ Cf. Plaut. *Asin.* 876-906; Ter. *Phorm.* 231-285; *Misogonus* II. 3.

⁴⁶ Cf. Plaut. *Mil.* 20; Ter. *Eun.* 401 ff.; *Supposes* I. 2.

⁴⁷ Cf. Plaut. *Curc.* 277-328; *Merc.* 109-161; Ter. *Adelph.* 305-327; *Ralph Roister Doister* III. 3. 7 ff.; *Supposes* V. 7. 1 ff.; *Bugbears* V. 4. 22ff.; *Misogonus* IV. 1. 22-24.

⁴⁸ Cf. Plaut. *Aul.* 280-459; *Merc.* 741-782; *Disobedient Child* (in Hazlitt's Ed. of Dodsley's *Old English Plays*, Vol. II), pp. 281-286; *Supposes* III. 1; *Misogonus* IV. 2. 17.

⁴⁹ Cf. Plaut. *Amph.* 1020-1027; *Most.* 445-454; *Jacke Jugeler* 326-331, 361-362; *Supposes* IV. 3. 68-74; *Bugbears* III, 2. 29-33. The same insistent knocking is introduced without humorous effect in *Troilus and Cressida* IV. 2. 34 ff., and serves to heighten the tragedy in *Macbeth* II. 2. 57 ff.

(*Comedy of Errors* I.2.92 ff.; II.2.23 ff.; IV.4.17 ff.; *Taming of the Shrew* I.2.12 ff.; IV.1.151 ff.).⁵⁰

Even the dialogue of Shakespeare's plays occasionally shows a Plautine coloring, most noticeable in scenes like *All's Well* II.2, where the Clown's reiterated "O Lord, sir! Spare not me!" corresponds to the *Censeo* and *I modo* of Plautine slaves (*Rud.* 1269-1278; *Trin.* 584-590). In view of the widespread use of foreign language and dialect in dramatic literature, too much weight should not be attached to chance resemblances. We may note, however, that the Greek words of Plautus give about the same tone as the sprinkling of French and Italian phrases in Shakespeare, and that the broken English of the Welsh, Scotch, and Irish soldiers in *Henry V*, and of Doctor Caius and Sir Hugh Evans in *The Merry Wives*, finds many parallels in Italian comedy. The scene in which the Princess Katherine of France learns English by the "direct method" (*Henry V.* III. 4) bears a faint resemblance to the monologue of the Carthaginian Hanno (Plaut. *Poen.* 930-954), and the Boy's interpretation of the French captive's plea (*Henry V* IV.4) must have made the same humorous appeal as Milphio's attempt to translate Punic greetings into Latin (*Poen.* 995-1028).⁵¹

It is evident, therefore, that Shakespeare typifies the influences which came into English both directly from Latin comedy and indirectly through German education-drama and Italian drama and romance. We see survivals of the tradition in a few externals, such as stage setting and the use of Prologue and Epilogue; in some devices of plot (which are common in the romances as well)—for example, mistaken identity and the restoration of long-lost children; in characters, drawn on conventional lines in Shakespeare's earlier plays, but rounded out

⁵⁰ Cf. Plaut. *Amph.* 370-397; *Aul.* 628-660; *Cas.* 404-421; *Jacke Jugeler* 442 ff.; 694; 910; *Misogonus* II. 1. 61-68.

⁵¹ On the use of dialect and foreign language in Italian plays, see Smith, *Commedia dell' Arte* p. 6; Senigaglia, *Capitan Spavento*, pp. 16-17, 78, 84-85. The effect of the foreign language was most humorous when foreign words could be confused with native words of similar sound. So, in *Poen.* 998, 1002-1003, Milphio understands *donni* as *doni*, and *meharbocca* as *misera bucca*; and in *Henry V.* IV. 4, Pistol interprets "Seigneur Dieu!" as "Signieur Dew," the gentleman's name. Latin words are distorted by the Man-Cook in *The Disobedient Child* (Dodsley's *Old English Plays*, Vol. II, pp. 284-285), and by Dame Quickly in *The Merry Wives* IV. 1.

and individualized in his mature work; and in stage-tricks like the perennially humorous beating on the gate.

The plots of Shakespeare show Plautine elements down to the very end of his literary activity, and in one play of the earliest and one of the latest period he has added the stock "recognition-scene" of classical drama to the material which he found in his sources. In general, however, the resemblances are more marked in the early plays, some of which can be traced directly to Latin or Italian sources: *The Comedy of Errors*, borrowed from Plautus; *The Taming of the Shrew*, taken (in part) from Plautus's imitator Ariosto; *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, reminiscent of the *miles gloriosus* and of his descendants in Italian comedy; and portions of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *All's Well*.

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